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Letter dated 15 October 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the Tbilisi Communiqué entitled "Educate today for a sustainable future", the outcome document of the Intergovernmental Conference on Environmental Education for Sustainable Development, held in Tbilisi on 6 and 7 September 2012 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex issued as an official document of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 20.

(*Signed*) Alexander **Lomaia**
Permanent Representative

12-56205 (E) 251012

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Annex to the letter dated 15 October 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Tbilisi Communiqué

Educate today for a sustainable future

Adopted at the International Conference on Environmental Education for Sustainable Development, held in Tbilisi on 6 and 7 September 2012

1. We, the representatives of Governments from 98 countries, as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, present at the Intergovernmental Conference on Environmental Education for Sustainable Development (Tbilisi+35) held in Tbilisi on 6 and 7 September 2012, at the invitation of the Government of Georgia in partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), adopt this Communiqué.

2. We recognize the historic significance of the 1977 Tbilisi Declaration adopted by the First Intergovernmental Conference on Environmental Education, and further, we recognize that environmental education processes support and champion education for sustainable development. This recognition is embodied in the Tbilisi+35 title "Environmental education for sustainable development". The United Nations system and Governments need to support environmental education within sound education for sustainable development policy frameworks. Different regions of the world have evolved sophisticated understandings of the relationship between environmental education and education for sustainable development, which is recognized in this Communiqué. The Communiqué's references to education for sustainable development acknowledge the critical importance of environmental education as it has evolved since the Tbilisi Declaration and speak to environmental education as well as education for sustainable development.

3. We commend the objectives of Tbilisi+35, which are to:

(a) Commemorate the thirty-fifth anniversary of the 1977 Tbilisi Declaration;

(b) Provide a platform for environmental, educational and other relevant authorities to enhance international cooperation for a concerted action for a sustainable future;

(c) Acknowledge achievements of the global community in the implementation of environmental education and education for sustainable development;

(d) Address the need for a balanced approach between environmental conservation and development;

(e) Present recommendations in the light of recent developments, particularly those resulting from the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

Evolving vision from Tbilisi to Tbilisi (1977-2012)

4. We recognize that the recommendations from the First Intergovernmental Conference on Environmental Education and the Tbilisi Declaration in 1977 have played a crucial role in framing education around environmental protection and sustainable development, thus providing the fundamental principles for education for sustainable development. The objectives outlined at the 1977 Tbilisi Conference — namely awareness, knowledge, attitude, skills and participation — are still valid today, and the main goal — aligning human behaviours, actions, practices and social conditions towards a sustainable future — has yet to be achieved.

5. We acknowledge the historical roots and contributions of environmental education and the related vision of education for sustainable development and its evolution from the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 1972); the International Workshop on Environmental Education (Belgrade, 1975); the First Intergovernmental Conference on Environmental Education (Tbilisi, 1977); the International Congress on Environmental Education and Training (Moscow, 1987); the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990); the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1992); the International Conference on Environment and Society: Education and Public Awareness for Sustainability (Thessaloniki, Greece, 1997); the Millennium Summit of the United Nations (New York, 2000); the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, South Africa, 2002); the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014); the Fourth International Conference on Environmental Education (Ahmedabad, India, 2007); the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (Bonn, 2009); and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio de Janeiro, 2012).

6. We acknowledge the achievements of 35 years of environmental education and the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development thus far and the global community's progress towards establishing education for sustainable development policies, strategies and initiatives at the global, regional, national and local levels; nevertheless, we note with regret that progress is still insufficient and unevenly distributed.

7. We recognize the key role and positive impact of the communication, education and public awareness provisions of multilateral environmental agreements and the development of environmental human rights, acknowledging as well the relationship between human rights and the environment; however, we note that their potential has yet to be fully realized in order to address the current sustainability challenges.

Rio+20 and "The future we want": new challenges for education

8. We take note of the Rio+20 outcome document entitled "The future we want", in particular the articles pertinent to education, as well as the recent findings of the UNESCO publication *Shaping the Education of Tomorrow: 2012 Report on the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development*, the UNEP publication *21 Issues for the 21st Century: Result of the UNEP Foresight Process on Emerging Environmental Issues*, the fifth edition of the UNEP report *Global Environment Outlook* (GEO 5), and the report of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability, among others.

9. We further note that humanity faces persisting global challenges as underlined by "The future we want", including, but not limited to poverty, inequitable ownership, distribution and the unsustainable use of resources; social and environmental injustice; unequal educational opportunities; poor health systems; overpopulation; gender inequality; disparities between rural and urban development; loss of cultural heritage and biological diversity; and climate change and exposure to disasters and risk.

10. We commend the decision of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), which stressed the importance of promoting education for sustainable development and more active integration of sustainable development into all levels and phases of the education and training system, and further welcome enhanced efforts on early childhood development, primary, secondary, vocational and higher education and training systems beyond the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

11. We welcome the statements of "The future we want", which recognize the green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication as one of the important tools available for achieving sustainable development and resilience. This requires an emphasis on education in bringing about a meaningful change in people's mindsets and attitudes in pursuing sustainable consumption and production patterns, as well as training and reskilling the labour force.

Capturing progress: endorsing good practices

12. We affirm that education is critical to achieving sustainable development, inter alia, fostering green economies and sustainable societies, to overcome social and economic inequality and to promote intergenerational and intragenerational solidarity, peace and responsible lifestyles.

13. We commend the practices of continuous monitoring, reassessment and the revision of education so that it is a lifelong, holistic and inclusive learning process delivering its purpose beyond mere knowledge acquisition and enhancing values and ethics, creating new patterns of behaviours and lifestyles in line with the core intent of the 1977 Tbilisi Declaration and the principles of the Earth Charter.

14. We stress the importance of lifelong learning experiences and learner-oriented systems that include formal, non-formal and informal education empowering people and communities with the essential knowledge and life skills to foster societal transformation towards sustainability, in particular, practices that encourage education for sustainable development to develop key competences that facilitate the understanding of complexity, dealing with uncertainty, ethical dilemmas and risk management.

15. We welcome efforts towards equal access to quality education at all levels for attaining sustainable development, particularly for disadvantaged groups, including women, young people, indigenous communities, internally displaced persons and refugees, persons with disabilities, rural and urban poor and ethnic and racial minorities.

16. We affirm the importance of the foundations of education for sustainable development starting in the early childhood years for formal and informal learning of young people.

26. Accelerate the institutionalization of education for sustainable development commitments at all levels contributing to good governance in overarching sustainable development processes;

27. Promote the empowerment of young people through education for sustainable development processes and encourage their creativity and leadership to become change agents for a sustainable future;

28. Encourage educational, environmental and other relevant authorities to take coordinated action by establishing partnerships among governmental agencies, civil society, the corporate sector and general, vocational and higher education institutions;

29. Address the issue of green economies in education for sustainable development, including better understanding of the role of green economies in achieving sustainable development, as well as providing the appropriate knowledge and skills for the creation of green jobs, while ensuring social equality;

30. Encourage initiatives and partnerships to address priority issues, such as the transition towards sustainable agriculture, water resources and ecosystems management, climate change, disaster risk reduction and resource efficiency, and to strengthen the role of environmental education within the context of education for sustainable development;

31. Support educational, environmental and other relevant authorities to adhere to education for sustainable development principles and approaches in their curriculum-planning, institutional mechanisms and staffing frameworks, so that the appropriate capacity exists for mainstreaming education for sustainable development into the education and environmental policies of all countries;

32. Encourage environmental, educational and other relevant education for sustainable development authorities and non-governmental organizations to actively incorporate education for sustainable development into national environmental and education action plans. To this end, we commend the full utilization of existing resources, including protected areas, such as UNESCO biosphere reserves, for outdoor learning and research; sensitizing children and adults to the existing and emerging sustainable development challenges and equipping them with hands-on knowledge and the skills for sustainable lifestyles;

33. Strengthen and upgrade the existing international mechanisms, organizations and institutions for transferring knowledge, technologies and innovations, for creating viable education for sustainable development capacities worldwide, and optimize the use of existing international educational exchanges and create new exchanges and partnerships within and across countries sponsoring fellowships, internships, and scholarships by, inter alia, employing new technologies, with special consideration of the needs of developing countries;

34. Advocate for investment in education for sustainable development to be considered as an integral part of development financing. Foster provision of financial opportunities through supporting the incorporation of education for sustainable development into the investment portfolios of national and international financial institutions;

35. Encourage and provide incentives for educational institutions to adopt the "whole institution approach", including design, construction, operation,

26. Accelerate the institutionalization of education for sustainable development commitments at all levels contributing to good governance in overarching sustainable development processes;

27. Promote the empowerment of young people through education for sustainable development processes and encourage their creativity and leadership to become change agents for a sustainable future;

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34. Advocate for investment in education for sustainable development to be considered as an integral part of development financing. Foster provision of financial opportunities through supporting the incorporation of education for sustainable development into the investment portfolios of national and international financial institutions;

35. Encourage and provide incentives for educational institutions to adopt the "whole institution approach", including design, construction, operation,

management, curricula, governance and connections with communities; and further promote good practices in this regard, including through building on the "handprint" concept which encourages tangible and positive education for sustainable development actions;

36. Support accelerated reforms in pre- and in-service teacher education programmes to enhance teachers' competencies in education for sustainable development;

37. Ensure that education for sustainable development is an integral element of the post-2015 education and development agenda and the prospective sustainable development goals, setting tangible global and national targets, in line with ongoing United Nations processes, to ensure high-quality, relevant, lifelong learning for sustainable development for all, and, in this context, ensure that at the end of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, a substantial post-Decade framework is in place for education for sustainable development;

38. Undertake measures to strengthen the evidence-based research on education for sustainable development, both qualitative and quantitative, that addresses learning processes and driving forces for positive change for environmental, economic and social sustainability in various contexts and settings;

39. Expand globally the regular monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of education for sustainable development beyond 2014, after the end of the United Nations Decade for Education for Sustainable Development, in order to capture the lessons learned and capitalize on progress made and challenges encountered, following existing examples at the regional and national levels;

40. Include progress on the recommendations of the Tbilisi Communiqué through existing education for sustainable development reporting mechanisms, including on the Bonn Declaration, as appropriate.

We thank the organizers of Tbilisi+35, the Government of Georgia and its partners, UNESCO and UNEP.

We request the Government of Georgia to transmit this Communiqué to relevant United Nations forums.